

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Johnny Ford

PERSON

Ford, Johnny, 1942-

Alternative Names: The Honorable Johnny Ford;

Life Dates: August 23, 1942-

Place of Birth: Midway, Alabama, USA

Residence: Tuskegee, AL

Work: Tuskegee, AL

Occupations: Political Leader

Biographical Note

Political leader Johnny Ford was born on August 23, 1942 in Midway, Alabama to Bertha and Willie Patterson, and was raised by his Aunt Tennessee Ford and Uncle Charlie Benjamin Ford. He graduated from Tuskegee Institute High School and received his B.A. degree from Knoxville College in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1964. Later, Ford received his M.P.A. degree from Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama in 1977.

After graduation, Ford moved to New York City and worked for the Greater New York Council of the Boy Scouts of America, where he served as a recruiter in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn and later became director of all Boy Scout activities in the South Bronx. In 1967, Ford worked as a strategist on the presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy. After Kennedy's assassination in 1968, Ford returned to Tuskegee, Alabama and began working as director of the Model Cities Program. From 1970 to 1972, he served as assistant director of the Multi-Racial Corporation and managed Fred Gray's campaign for the Alabama House of Representatives. During this period, Ford also worked in the Montgomery office of the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure compliance with the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1972, Ford was elected Mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama as its first black mayor. That same year, Ford co-founded the Southern Conference of Black Mayors, which later evolved into the National Conference of Black Mayors, incorporated in 1974. Ford later established the World Conference of Mayors, Inc. in 1984, which convened mayors from the U.S., Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Ford was unseated by Ronald D. Williams in the 1996 Tuskegee mayoral election; and, in 1998, he was elected state representative of the 82nd District from Macon County, Alabama. In 2004, Ford

resigned from the state legislature and was re-elected as Mayor of Tuskegee. He was later defeated by Omar Neal in the 2008 mayoral election in Tuskegee. In 2012, Ford was then re-elected Mayor of Tuskegee and was sworn into an eighth non-consecutive term as mayor. In 2016, Lawrence Tony Haygood unseated Ford and was elected Mayor of Tuskegee.

Ford served as president of the Alabama League of Municipalities and president of the National Conference of Black Mayors. He was also a member of the Alabama Foreign Trade Commission, Alabama Municipal Electric Authority, Kappa Alpha Psi, and Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church. Ford was a former chair of the National Unity Alliance and was founding president of the Tuskegee Optimist Club. He also received an honorary doctorate of laws degree from Alabama A&M University in 2004.

Johnny Ford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 25, 2019.

Related Entries

Auburn University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.P.A.

Knoxville College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Washington Public Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Tuskegee Institute High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

City of Tuskegee [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2012 to 2016]

Mayor

City of Tuskegee [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2004 to 2008]

Mayor

Alabama House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to 2004]

Representative - AL82

City of Tuskegee [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1972 to 1996]

Mayor

Multi Racial Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to 1972]

Assistant Director

United States Department of Justice [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1971 to 1972]

Compliance Officer

Model Cities Program [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1969 to 1970]

Director

Greater New York Council of the Boy Scouts of America [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1964 to 1968]

Recruiter, then Director

Fred Gray Campaign for AL House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1971 to 1971]

Campaign Manager

Robert Kennedy Senatorial Campaign [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1967 to 1967]

Campaign Strategist

World Conference of Mayors [MEMBEROf]
[from 1977 to ?]

Director General

Johnny Ford and Associates, Inc. [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

President

National Conference of Black Mayors [MEMBEROf]
[from 1972 to ?]

Founder; President Emeritus

Presidential Advisory Committee in Federalism [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member

U.S. Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Committee on Trade [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Member

Alabama League of Municipalities [MEMBEROf]
[from 1990 to ?]

President

